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Technology Firms Flock Back to Washington With Security Pitches

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WASHINGTON—In the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, a high-tech lobbying revival is sweeping through the nation's capital.

Chief executives and lobbyists representing technology companies big and small are reworking their products—or at least their sales pitches—to win federal blessing to sell their gadgets as solutions to the country's homeland-security concerns.

Upstart Vocent of Mountain View, Calif., is shopping its voice-identification technology for airports as the "secure answer to the security needs of today's society." Vocent is scheduled to pitch its product to top Federal Aviation Administration officials next week. Iridium Satellite LLC of Arlington, Va., also is lobbying the FAA to approve its system for providing real-time flight data and voice monitoring of commercial aircraft. The company takes credit for language inserted in the Senate aviation bill directing the FAA to study its technology.

And technology heavyweight Qualcomm Inc. is pushing real-time video and audio monitoring of airplane cabins and cockpits, and a variety of other products, including a global-positioning system for trucks that carry hazardous materials and state-of-the-art mobile telephones for policy makers.

Rep. Mike Honda, a Democrat from California's Silicon Valley, says the push for technology that would close security gaps promises to "reshape and enhance security in our airports and other public places," and at the same time "revitalize the technology sector of our economy."

Mr. Honda, among others, has put together a series of meetings between Silicon Valley executives and federal policy makers, including top officials at the FAA and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Two weeks ago, Mr. Honda arranged for about a half-dozen companies, including Vocent, to showcase their products for lawmakers and aides at a closed-door meeting in the House Budget Committee room. He later introduced a bill that would provide billions of dollars in funding to the technology companies in attendance.

The red-carpet treatment is reminiscent of the reception that technology companies got when the stock market was booming a year ago. During 2000, lawmakers were piling up frequent-flyer miles as they jetted to and from Silicon Valley to meet the tech sector's wizards and solicit both their help and contributions.

Since last year's elections, however, Washington's interest has plummeted right along with the Nasdaq Stock Market. President Bush has been slow to fill his much-ballyhooed technology-advisory group, af-

ter appointing Silicon Valley venture capitalist Floyd Kvamme as his technology czar early this year. Also early this year, the White House dropped its plan for a research and development tax credit—an industry priority—as part of the massive tax package.

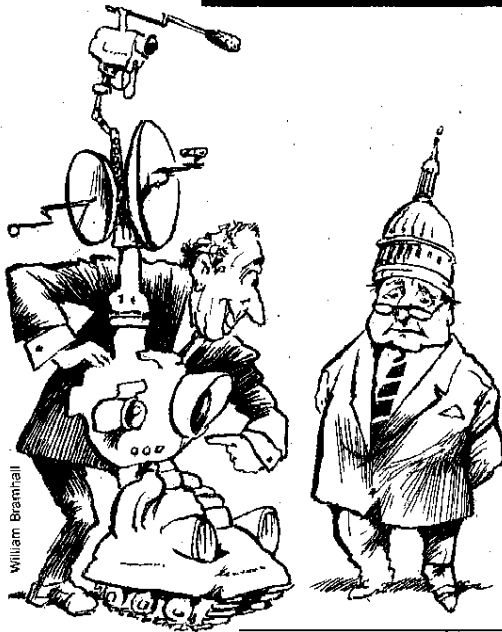
High-tech companies were sidelined during many of the legislative fights during the first nine months of the year. As their fortunes ebbed, most cut back on their Washington representation, as well as on costly trips to plead their cases.

But the Sept. 11 attacks reignited Washington's interest in cutting-edge products—particularly ones that can be easily adapted for security purposes. The Defense Department wants proposals for surveillance products, including systems that can see through walls or detect explosive devices.

FAA Administrator Jane Garvey says her agency has received roughly 23,000 proposals for new airline-security devices since Sept. 11, many of them coming from technology firms.

One of the early winners is Rapiscan Security Products, a subsidiary of OSI Systems Inc. of Hawthorne, Calif. The FAA recently awarded Rapiscan \$1.4 million to step up development of technology to detect explosives in carry-on and checked luggage. The FAA funds follow a smaller grant earlier this year, and will help Rapiscan develop a working prototype.

But most of the lobbying campaigns are just getting up and running. Qualcomm—whose stock had fallen to \$38.31 on Oct. 5 from its 52-week high of \$107.81 on Dec. 6, but has since bounced back to \$49.12—is at the forefront of this movement, preparing an ambitious lobbying



High-Tech Lobbying

Companies that are asking policy makers to use their technology to tighten homeland security:

COMPANY	GADGET
Iridium Satellite LLC	Real-time voice and data recorder
@Road	Global vehicle-tracking system
EDS	People and asset tracker
Identix	Fingerprint identifier
Maximus	FlySecure smart cards
Vocent	Voiceprint authentication
Qualcomm	Real-time video transmitters
Recognitions Systems	HandReaders

campaign to sell the Bush administration on several of its technologies.

The company is pitching its repackaged "ViaWeb" global-positioning technology, which trucking companies use to monitor their fleets, to the Transportation Department as a way to track vehicles hauling hazardous materials. In the early days of the hijacking investigation, law-enforcement officials learned that some detainees had unlawfully obtained special hauling licenses for such materials, and feared terrorists might be prepared to ram trucks loaded with toxics into buildings or tunnels.

Qualcomm is tweaking its technology so it could be used to alert authorities if a truck carrying hazardous material ventured too close to federal buildings, power

plants or other potential targets. Qualcomm officials plan to meet soon with Transportation Department officials to shop their product.

Qualcomm has enlisted the lobbying firm headed by former Republican Rep. Tom Loeffler of Texas, a close friend and top fund-raiser for President Bush, for its broad campaign. With Mr. Loeffler's assistance, the company is also lobbying the FAA to approve its video- and voice-streaming technologies. Jonas Neihardt, the company's vice president of government affairs, said airlines could use the devices to beam real-time images and conversations from cabins and cockpits to Earth, potentially replacing the black-box recorders used in crash investigations.

Qualcomm isn't the only company trying to build its business in this area.

Iridium has partnered with Honeywell International Inc. on the proposal to add real-time voice and data recorders to commercial airlines. Honeywell's own agenda, though, is much broader. Executives say the FAA contacted Honeywell shortly after Sept. 11, and the two have since been talking about ways to boost safety. The company has launched a special initiative to develop and market safety products, such as special fibers that could be used to strengthen cockpit doors. In addition to the FAA, the company is also targeting the Pentagon and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

"As a company, we begin with the obvious recognition that the scope of the tragedy overwhelms everything else," says Mike Naylor, Honeywell's vice president for government relations. "We'd kind of like to make money without it being required by a tragedy of this magnitude. But we are also well-positioned to help."